

first appearance in literature as a talker, and they remain the best record of his more intellectual conversation. The Jewelled phrases and purple perorations have delighted his disciples and vexed many earnest seekers after truth; but it is not difficult to separate the original thought from the tapestry of words that "Wilde loved to weave.

In the year 1890 his only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, appeared in *Lippincott's Magazine*. It was published in book form, with some additional chapters and a preface, in 1891. Its appearance was followed by one of those periodical outbreaks of moral indignation which are so characteristic of British journalistic critics, and but for which the world we live in would be a far gloomier place. At any rate it provided Wilde with a lot of wholesome amusement. In various letters to the press he laid about him with a will and annoyed every one -who couldn't enjoy the performance. The general feeling seemed to be that *Dorian Gray* was an immoral work. Nowadays the general feeling seems to be that it is an extremely moral work. In fact the moral is driven home with a crude pulpit-punch that should satisfy a Salvationist.

Setting aside this serious artistic blemish, *Dorian Gray* is a masterpiece of mosaic. It has been called "the first French novel to be written in the English language." But for us it has an appeal quite unrelated to its position in literature. It is the most complete expression of Wilde's personality we possess, and therefore far more interesting as a human document than *De Profundis*. "Give a man a mask and he will tell you the truth," was one of his sayings. The character of Lord Henry Wotton is Wilde's major in this novel. It is almost a full-length self-portrait of the author. And the rest of the book is a compendium of his interests, opinions, and emotions. The best of his wit is also here; at a later date he incorporated it in his three serio-comedies. He even gives a description of himself as a talker, and none of his friends or acquaintances has been able to capture his charm as a light-hearted conversationalist half so well as he does it himself in the character of Lord Henry. It is hardly necessary to add that whenever, in the course of the story, Wilde ceases to be artificial, he ceases to be real. The scenes that are supposed to represent actual life in the Euston Road and elsewhere are appalling—worse, if possible, than the serious scenes in his comedies. The point to remember about

Wilde is that,